

AUDITING FOR RESULTS

KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

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King County

October 2010

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2009 EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES FINANCIAL & COMPLIANCE AUDIT

This year's audit of the voter-approved six-year Emergency Medical Services (EMS) levy found that financial activities in 2009 were conducted in accordance with the adopted EMS Levy financial plan and policies. The audit also found that many strategic initiatives advanced EMS system objectives of improving patient care, managing paramedic services, and achieving system efficiencies. However, we could not determine from reported outcomes the extent to which many other strategic initiatives had actually achieved expected efficiencies and cost savings. We also found that paramedic vehicles are currently used less than vehicles used by six EMS peers, and optimum vehicle use has not been determined using life cycle cost analysis.

The audit recommends strengthening the reporting of EMS detailed program balances and reserves by tying accounting data and calculations in Excel worksheets back to the county financial systems. The audit also recommends that the EMS Division use the results of a planned benchmarking study to help identify topics for future strategic initiatives to achieve greater efficiencies and cost savings, and initiate changes to extend the useful life of paramedic vehicles.

KING COUNTY METRO TRANSIT BUS PROCUREMENT

This performance audit of Transit's bus procurement program establishes a method that Transit should use to measure bus quality, cost, and timeliness of procurement; determines the level of Transit's success in recent bus procurements; and identifies steps that Transit can take to increase the likelihood that upcoming bus procurements will be successful.

We found that Transit has been generally successful in purchasing similar buses at lower cost than other transit entities we surveyed. However, Transit should strengthen its bus quality assurance efforts and establish performance measures in order to demonstrate that bus purchases have been timely.

Implementing the audit recommendations will reduce the cost, enhance the quality, and improve the timeliness of Transit's bus purchases. By implementing these recommendations, Transit will be able to evaluate, improve, and demonstrate the effectiveness of bus procurement.

FINANCIAL REVIEW OF UNFUNDED MANDATES

In response to Motion 13074, the executive requested county agencies to identify unfunded state mandates, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), in consultation with the Prosecuting Attorney's Office (PAO), screened the list to include only those items that in the judgment of OMB and the PAO met the statutory definition of an unfunded state mandate. The executive transmitted the list of unfunded mandates to the council in June of 2010, and we conducted a financial review of the list.

The list of unfunded mandates submitted by the executive included ten separate state mandates identified by four different county agencies with a total fiscal impact of \$385,530 to county agencies. We reviewed the methodologies used by the four agencies in estimating these costs and, while the degree of precision of the estimates varied, we found the estimates reasonable. We found one example, related to the property retention schedule in the Sheriff's Office, where the cost estimate of a mandate on the executive's list was not supported.

Projects Scheduled for Completion Winter 2010

- *Audit of Facilities Maintenance Division Custodial Services*
- *Audit of Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention Changes in Jail Population*
- *Review of Wastewater Treatment Division's Productivity Initiative*
- *Jail Health Services Pharmacy and Medication Administration Audit Follow-up*

COUNTYWIDE COMMUNITY FORUMS

Countywide Community Forums is a King County public engagement program that is independently funded and run by volunteers and overseen by the Auditor's Office. The fifth round of community engagement on the topic of *Public Trust: Customer Service and Public Engagement* ended on June 13, 2010. Thirty-three forums were organized in homes and libraries around King County and 306 surveys were completed.

The survey showed that while 36% of respondents were neutral, 41% were satisfied about King County institutions as a whole. Respondents are only moderately informed about King County institutions. Among customer service characteristics expected from King County, respondents valued knowledgeable staff most highly followed by service that was timely and fair. A slight majority agreed that both their recent King County experience was satisfactory, and that they were able to accomplish their goals in a reasonable amount of time.

The sixth round of forums explores the topic of *Citizen Priorities for Government in Challenging Economic Times*. The findings will be available on the auditor's website in early November 2010. For more information on Countywide Community Forums or to view reports from the three rounds of forums, go to www.kingcounty.gov/auditor/communityforums

CAPITAL PROJECTS OVERSIGHT PROGRAM

The Capital Projects Oversight Program (CPO) was established to promote the delivery of capital projects in accordance with the council-approved scope, schedule, and budget and to provide timely and accurate project reporting.

We provided technical input to new legislation passed in March, which established standardized requirements for reporting and cost estimating for all capital projects and required phased appropriation for high-risk capital projects. The CPO program then developed a scoring instrument to assess risk on all projects over \$10 million. The approved scoring instrument considers fifteen different factors and objectively evaluates their risk impact on successful delivery of capital projects. The information gathering requires less than one hour of a project manager's time for each project, and provides for agency quality control and verification. It also automatically calculates a numeric risk score and generates standardized reports.

Our direct project oversight of the \$188 million Ninth and Jefferson Building and the \$20 million Data Center Relocation will wrap up within the next few months. The final oversight reports document the project delivery performance results and the lessons learned on the projects.

Our oversight of the \$1.8 billion Brightwater wastewater treatment system construction and the \$86 million Accountable Business Transformation effort to streamline business practices and replace the county's enterprise human resources, payroll, finance, and budget systems will continue. Over the year, we have made quarterly reports to the council including recommendations to mitigate risks, control costs, and improve on schedule performance for these important and complex capital projects.

COUNTYWIDE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

By direction of the King County Council, the King County Auditor's Office founded and has facilitated the Performance Management Work Group since 2003. The Work Group, which has representation from all agencies overseen by elected officials, has played a leadership role in building a sustainable performance-based culture in the county by developing a sense of trust and collaboration among its members in the three branches of county government.

In the months leading to the approval of the first Countywide Strategic Plan by the council in June 2010, the Work Group served as a countywide resource for advising on and reviewing modifications to the different draft plans. It facilitated approval of the plan by sponsoring discussions, educational presentations, and briefings to the council.

The Work Group continues to promote integration of and collaboration among the different programs and elements of performance and accountability across the three branches of government.

Mission Statement

Through objective and independent audits and services, we promote and improve performance, accountability, and transparency in King County government.

For more information about the King County Auditor's Office and for the full text of audits listed above, please visit our website listed below.